

Who Will Save Her?



July 23, 2007

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● The next issue of
 ● Capitol Journal will be
 ● available on August 6th.
 ●

Top Story

Hurricane Katrina focused attention on the need for states to account for evacuating pets in their disaster preparation planning. But this year, several states have also started to factor pets into another dangerous situation — domestic abuse.

SNCJ Spotlight

States act to save pets in danger

Most animal owners consider their pets to be members of the family. With this in mind, numerous state legislatures have in recent years implemented measures aimed at protecting animals in perilous situations. While those efforts originally focused on evacuating animals in disaster scenarios like Hurricane Katrina, many lawmakers are now also moving to enact greater protection for pets caught in violent domestic environments.

So far this year, four states have enacted laws aimed at stopping domestic abuse of animals, with at least two more states poised to follow suit. To date, CONNECTICUT, TENNESSEE and NEVADA have enacted laws that authorize the court to include a prohibition on harming pets involved in domestic violence cases. MAINE and VERMONT had previously approved similar laws folding animals into domestic abuse protection. In May of this year, INDIANA enacted HB 1387, which adds certain animal cruelty acts to the state's anti-abuse statutes and allows the court to block a person convicted of certain animal cruelty offenses from owning a pet.

Animal domestic abuse bills have also advanced in CALIFORNIA — SB 353, sponsored by Sen. Sheila Kuehl (D) — and ILLINOIS, where lawmakers are currently waiting for Governor Rod Blagojevich (D) to sign HB 9, which relates to animal custody in domestic abuse cases. At least seven other states have similar bills pending (See *Bird's eye view* in this issue).

The intent of these laws is fairly straightforward — to stop disgruntled people from harming a pet in order to cause its owner pain. “People use verbal abuse and threats [in domestic abuse cases],” says Curtis Ransom, West Coast Regional Program Manager for the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). “The abuser uses intimidation. Sometimes the abuser will kill the animal just because they have the power to do so.”

In an interview with *SNCJ*, Ransom pointed to a recent situation in MISSOURI, when, during an intense argument, a young woman's boyfriend tossed her pet cat out of a 17th story apartment window. The man received a \$100 fine. Kuehl's SB 353 also cites, among other examples, “a 1997 Humane Society of the United States survey showing that 85 percent of women and 63 percent of children surveyed at large battered women's shelters discussed incidents of pet abuse.”

Ransom lauds the move to protect animals from domestic violence, saying, “[These laws] will make a huge difference because it takes out another tool for abuse. It will help limit using pets as a control method over family.”

But while most lawmakers agree with the premise behind these measures, securing funding to cover the additional enforcement cost has been problematic in some states. RHODE ISLAND Sen. John Tassoni (D), who authored SB 770, which would have required courts to issue animal protective orders against persons found

The week in session

States in Regular Session: CA, DC, IL, MA, MI, NC, US, WI

States in Skeleton Session: OH

States in Special Session: IL “a”, IL “b”, IL “c”, IL “d”, IL “e”, IL “f”, IL “g”, IL “h”

States in Recess: NH, NJ, NY, PA

Special Sessions in Recess: CT “a”, DE “a”, KY “a”

States Currently Prefiling or Drafting for 2008:: FL, KY

States Adjourned in 2007: AK, AL, AR, AZ, CO, CT, DE, FL, GA, HI, IA, ID, IN, KS, KY, LA, MD, ME, MN, MS, MT, ND, NE, NM, NV, OK, OR, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VA, VT, WA, WV, WY

State Special Sessions Adjourned in 2007: AK “a”, AL “a”, FL “a”, FL “b”, HI “a”, MS “a”, MT “a”, NM “a”, NV “a”, WI “a”, WV “a”

Letters indicate special/extraordinary sessions

— Compiled By JAMES ROSS
(session information current as of 07/20/2007)
Source: State Net database

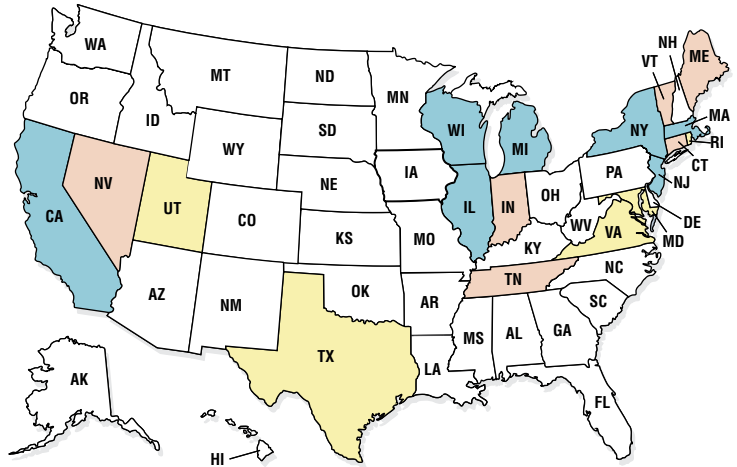
guilty of abusing animals, said his bill lacked any opposition, but concerns over the cost of implementing it derailed the proposal. UTAH, MARYLAND and VIRGINIA also rejected similar proposals this session. Undaunted, Tassoni says he plans to re-introduce the bill in November. “We’ve had lots of people hoarding and abusing animals,” Tassoni says. “It’s the same people over and over. We need a piece of legislation to stop this problem.”

Pet protection became a prominent national issue in 2005 in the aftermath of the devastation caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, primarily in LOUISIANA and MISSISSIPPI. As witnessed during the evacuations, particularly in New Orleans, many people simply would not leave their pets behind when disaster struck, creating a scenario that often placed both victims and rescuers in greater danger. With this in mind, at least 25 states have since passed bills to enforce emergency plans for animals, including special animal rescue and animal shelter.

The federal government also got into the act in October 2006 when President George W. Bush signed legislation that requires states to include animals in their disaster plans. Charlie Smith, who was a lobbyist for the LOUISIANA SPCA in 2006, says the situation in New Orleans illustrates the critical need for governments to factor pet evacuation into their disaster planning. “Animal legislation is not a matter of rescuing animals, it is rescuing humans,” he says, noting that, “People who lost their pets felt they lost everything.”

Perhaps fittingly, LOUISIANA was the first state to implement evacuation standards for pets. Under a measure sponsored by Sen. Heulette “Clo” Fontenot (R), the Pelican State assists municipal governments with the evacuation and shelter of

Bird’s eye view



Source: State Net Enacted pet domestic abuse measures Considering pet abuse measures Rejected pet domestic abuse measures



Increasing pet protection

Spurred by the loss of human and animal life in Hurricane Katrina, state lawmakers are taking a greater role in protecting pets caught in bad situations. Since LOUISIANA adopted its pet evacuation law in 2006, at least 24 other states, including CALIFORNIA, CONNECTICUT, NEW JERSEY, and OREGON have also taken action to make sure pets are considered in disaster evacuation planning. The federal government has also adopted a law requiring states to include pets in disaster preparation. In a further effort to protect pets caught in bad situations, six states have recently enacted legislation to shield pets caught between warring domestic partners. Most of those measures expand spousal protective orders to include family pets, essentially barring someone from harming a pet in order to hurt their estranged mate. Seven other states are working to pass similar bills. The accompanying map shows states that have enacted or considered animal abuse bills.



displaced animals. It also provides a public information campaign to prepare pet owners for evacuations, and helps pet owners develop personal evacuation plans. “An emergency can happen anywhere in our country,” says Cathy Wells, a researcher for the LOUISIANA Senate Committee on Environmental Quality and the person who drafted the measure. “The magnitude and numbers of Hurricane Katrina put animal rescue in the spotlight.”

But several other states, including MAINE, MONTANA, and WYOMING have rejected animal evacuation and shelter bills. Although tight budgets are again the main culprit, some states are also concerned with the safety and well being of the volunteers who assist the animals.

While similar proposals are working their way into other statehouses, several public and private groups have opted not to wait for government plans by establishing their own animal assistance services. The American Humane Association, for one, offers volunteers who are on call 24 hours a day to assess community and animal needs, transport endangered animals to safety, care for injured or stranded animals, provide food and water, and reunite pets with their families.

Animal advocates say they hope that future animal legislation will compliment these existing animal services. According to Wells, while these organizations have long served animals, policy makers everywhere are beginning to realize the impact a pet has on a family. She credits public pressure for helping to get that message across, noting that “the people in LOUISIANA encouraged pet evacuation legislation” by, among other things, writing letters to newspapers to remind lawmakers that “during Hurricane Katrina, people wouldn’t evacuate without their pets.”

“People are getting the message that pets are important in people’s lives,” Wells adds.

— *By MARNEY RANDLE*

Budget & taxes

HOMELAND SECURITY \$\$ CONTINUE TO DECLINE: The U.S. Department of Homeland Security announced last week that it will disburse a total of \$1.7 billion to state and local governments this fiscal year, continuing the steady downward trend in federal counterterrorism funding since FY 2004’s high of \$2.9 billion. That news prompted a concerned letter from the National Governors Association to Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff maintaining that “sustained and predictable funding for homeland security grant programs is critical to continuing our efforts to develop and maintain state, regional and national capabilities.”



Chertoff wasn't particularly receptive to the governors' entreaty, stating that the federal government had provided over \$23 billion in grants over the years and that state officials shouldn't count on funding levels remaining consistent. "These grants are meant to be an investment in capital. They are meant to build capabilities," he said. "They are not meant to be annuities or entitlements, where you get the same amount every year, like a Social Security check."

This year's disbursements, however, did appear to have taken into account the criticism leveled against the department last year for slashing aid by 40 percent to the two cities hardest hit in the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. New York City was awarded \$134 million, a \$10 million increase over last year, and Washington,

D.C. and its surrounding suburbs received \$62 million, up \$15 million from FY '07.

Still, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg (I) was "disappointed" that funding had not been allocated strictly on the basis of risk. "Every city in theory

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could be a target but...the mistake that is always made is confusing where you're vulnerable to where you're likely to be attacked," he said. "Clearly, if there's any lesson that we've learned over the last few years it's the handful of big, international symbol cities, if you will, around the world where terrorists tend to attack," adding "New York, clearly, more than any other city in this country, qualifies."

Chertoff, once again, was unmoved. "If we answer the wish lists of the top tier cities, basically there would be nothing left," he said, adding that "If we put all the money there, we'd be inviting people to attack second-level cities."

As it is, the top seven cities on the DHS terrorist threat list — New York, Los Angeles, Washington D.C., Chicago, Houston, San Francisco and Jersey City/Newark — have received \$410 million, or 55 percent, of the total \$747 million in grants to urban areas. The top five recipients of state aid were CALIFORNIA, TEXAS, NEW YORK, FLORIDA and ILLINOIS. (STATELINE.ORG, WASHINGTON POST)

MIXED RESULTS MIDWAY THROUGH FL MEDICAID EXPERIMENT: FLORIDA is halfway through its two-year Medicaid pilot program, which former Gov. Jeb Bush (R) described as the "the single biggest change and the boldest reform that any state has embarked on for the Medicaid program." And so far the results of the study have been mixed. While fewer doctors, particularly specialists, have been taking on Medicaid patients in the two counties where the pilot program is being conducted, there's been no exodus of physicians from Medicaid in those counties. Patients have racked up over \$3.7 million in rewards — which can be used to purchase health products at drug stores — for making healthy choices like quitting



smoking and keeping their medical appointments, but only about \$93,000 worth have been redeemed so far. The state says there have also been few complaints from chronically ill patients about the quality of care they’ve been receiving under the program, but patient advocates say such patients are failing to get needed treatment. What’s more, it’s still unclear whether the program is actually meeting its primary goal: saving the state money. State officials say the new program isn’t any more expensive than the old one, but they’ll need at least six more months of data to really be able to compare costs. (WASHINGTON POST)

BUDGETS IN BRIEF: Last Monday, **PENNSYLVANIA** lawmakers passed and Gov. Ed Rendell (D) signed the state budget they hammered out the week before, officially bringing an end to the budget impasse that led to a one-day partial government shutdown (PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER). • The **NEW YORK** senate adjourned its special session without taking up New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s traffic congestion pricing plan, after it became clear there were not enough votes in the chamber to pass it. Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver (D), meanwhile, proposed sending the issue to a study commission. When asked if the congestion pricing plan was dead, one supporter, Sen. Martin J. Golden (R), replied, “It doesn’t sound like it’s alive, that’s for sure” (NEW YORK TIMES). • **MICHIGAN** corrections officials announced last week that they will lay off about 2,000 prisoner-workers who perform such services as shoveling snow, mowing grass and digging graves in order to save about \$6 million per year (DETROIT NEWS). • **SOUTH CAROLINA** has received federal approval to test two Medicaid-reform programs. One will establish health care accounts with set limits — \$2,500 per adult, \$1,000 per child — to encourage Medicaid recipients to rely less on the traditional Medicaid program, and the other will allow recipients to opt for a high-deductible plan similar to the one available to public employees (MORRIS NEWS SERVICE, AUGUSTA CHRONICLE).

— *Compiled by KOREY CLARK*

Politics & leadership

COURT RULING COULD HURT MS DEMS: Although the governor of MISSISSIPPI is a Republican and the Grand Old Party also controls the Senate, Democrats have a lock on the House and many local government offices. But that could soon change as a result of a federal court ruling last month requiring the state’s voters to register and vote by party.

Under the state’s existing primary system, centrist Democrats have managed to succeed at the state and local level — in a state that votes decidedly Republican



in national races — in part by attracting the support of Republican-leaning voters in the primaries. But black Democrats filed suit to stop Republicans from influencing the outcome of their primaries, and on June 8, Federal District Court Judge W. Allen Pepper Jr. ruled in their favor, stating that the Democratic Party of MISSISSIPPI had the right to “disassociate itself” from voters who were not actually Democrats.

While black Democratic leaders welcomed the decision, not every member of the state’s Democratic Party was happy about it. White Democrats fear it could severely erode the Party’s power at the state and local level. And some experts say that’s a legitimate fear. “If forced to make a decision,” said R. Andrew Taggart, chief of

staff for former Gov. Kirk Fordice (R), a plurality of MISSISSIPPI voters will identify themselves as Republican.” And if white voters go Republican, say the experts, white office-holders and office-seekers

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will follow. “If this thing comes to pass, it’s the end of the Democratic Party in the state of MISSISSIPPI,” said longtime centrist Sen. Hob Bryan (D). (NEW YORK TIMES)

VA DRIVER FEES COULD BECOME ELECTION ISSUE: The “abusive driver” fees that VIRGINIA lawmakers passed this year as part of a transportation funding plan could come back to haunt them in November. An online petition demanding that lawmakers repeal the fees, which would be imposed on motorists convicted of serious traffic offenses, such as drunk driving — and which top \$1,000, in some cases — or risk being voted out of office, had garnered close to 100,000 signatures by last Monday. At one point in the day, the petition was drawing over 1,000 signatures an hour.

Although lawmakers said the fees will affect less than 2 percent of VIRGINIA drivers, critics charged that the fees will unfairly impact the poor. “If people had known what was going on, they would have said they would have

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rather had a gas tax increase,” said one petition signer. “There are a lot of people barely in a situation of being able to pay their bills, and they get into a situation where they get a fine and it becomes involuntary servitude to the state....”

With all of the state’s 140 Senate and House seats up for election in the fall, lawmakers are sitting up and taking notice of the public outcry. Several have called on

Upcoming elections

7/18/2007 - 08/08/2007

07/31/2007

New Hampshire Special Election

House Rockingham District No. 14
(Hampton Falls, Kensington, Seabrook, South Hampton)

08/07/2007

Alabama Special Primary

Senate District 32

South Carolina Special Election

Senate District 44



Gov. Tim Kaine (D) to convene a special session to reconsider the issue this summer or fall. “I think it has gotten people riled up enough, and it is clearly an issue so many Virginians feel strongly about, [that] the governor needs to listen to those people and call us into a special session,” said Sen. Jeannemarie Devolites Davis (R).

Kaine and House Speaker William Howell (R) said lawmakers would revisit the issue, but probably not until the start of the regular session in January. And Del. David B. Albo (R), one of the primary backers of the abusive driver fees, bickered that the alternative of a tax increase likely wouldn’t fare much better with voters. “...I bet there would be a petition with 100,000 people on it if we raised the gas tax,” he said. (WASHINGTON POST)

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Association and other groups to raise \$1 million in the last three months to oppose the initiative, contending that it would hurt the state’s economy and crowd elections with hundreds of local referendums every year. And some say the developing battle could ultimately cost as much as \$65 million. “From where we sit, it’s going to be a very expensive campaign,” said Michael Caputo, who recently opened the headquarters for the opposition group Floridians for Smarter Growth. (ST. PETERSBURG TIMES)

POLITICS IN BRIEF: The MICHIGAN Supreme Court ruled last week that a state law requiring voters to show photo ID or swear to their identity is constitutional. The law was originally passed in 1996 and renewed in 2005, but never took effect because former Attorney General Frank Kelly (D) decreed that it violated the 14th

In the hopper

At any given time, State Net tracks tens of thousands of bills in all 50 states, the US Congress and the District of Columbia. Here’s a snapshot of what’s in the legislative works:

Number of prefiles last week: 65

Number of Intros last week: 550

Number of bills enacted/adopted last week: 535

Number of prefiles to date: 34,855

Number of Intros to date: 150,417

Number of enacted/adopted overall to date: 38,436

— Compiled By JAMES ROSS
(measures current as of 07/19/2007)
Source: State Net database



Amendment's equal protection clause (ASSOCIATED PRESS, LOS ANGELES TIMES). • The ILLINOIS House passed a non-binding resolution last week calling on Gov. Rod Blagojevich (D) to “reside in Springfield” — as opposed to Chicago, where he prefers to stay to be with his family — while he and lawmakers remain deadlocked on the state budget, suggesting that tensions haven't eased between the governor and House Speaker Michael Madigan (D) (see IL HOUSE REJECTS GOV'S LOTTERY PLAN in July 16 issue of SNCJ) (CHICAGO SUN-TIMES).

— Compiled by KOREY CLARK

Governors

RITTER ORDERS CO SECURITY AUDIT: Last week's fatal shooting outside of his office at the COLORADO statehouse has prompted Gov. Bill Ritter (D) to order a security audit of the entire Capitol complex. The shooting occurred when a security officer intercepted a mentally disturbed man after he appeared to be heading toward Ritter's office door. The man had loudly declared he was “the emperor” and “here to take over the state.” The officer shot and killed the suspect after he refused to leave and displayed a handgun from under his coat.

The audit comes several years after Centennial State lawmakers opted to remove Capitol metal detectors that were installed after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Before the incident on Monday, statehouse visitors could come and go through a half dozen entrances, none of which screened for firearms or other weapons. But Ritter's office was locked after the shooting, and visitors entering the Capitol were forced to come in through a basement door with a metal detector. COLORADO was one

of about 15 states that installed metal detectors after 9/11, but took them out shortly thereafter. Currently, 30 states do not use Capitol metal detectors.

Additional options for upgrading security include adding state troopers, locking interior doors and cutting back the hours in which the public can access the building. But some lawmakers were wary of overreacting to the situation.

“The perpetrator was the only one who lost his life. I'm hopeful that it's still a place where the people can still see their government at work and we're not in a fortress Capitol”

House Minority Leader Mike May, (R), said he hoped the public still would have easy access to the building.

“The system did work Monday,” May said. “The perpetrator was the only one who lost his life. I'm hopeful that it's still a place where the people can still see their government at work and we're not in a fortress Capitol.”



But Ritter vowed not to allow a knee-jerk reaction, saying that he and legislative leaders would address any security upgrade in “a thoughtful and prudent way.” (DENVER POST)

EXECUTIVE ORDERS: MISSOURI Gov. Matt Blunt (R) issued EO 30, which “orders the Commissioner of Administration to establish the MISSOURI Accountability Portal as a free, internet based tool allowing citizens to demand fiscal discipline and responsibility from state government (STATE NET). • UTAH Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. (R) issued an emergency declaration asking local governments to ban personal fireworks due to unusual fire danger this season. Fireworks are already banned on all state and federal unincorporated lands in the Beehive State (DESERET MORNING NEWS [PROVO]).

GOVERNORS IN BRIEF: CALIFORNIA Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) signed SB 221, legislation that requires pensions for state constitutional officers to be based on the highest average salary during a 12-month period. The measure was a response to a recent practice of officers receiving pensions based on large salary hikes that came during their last months in office (SACRAMENTO BEE). • **FLORIDA** Gov. Charlie Crist (R) has given his okay to the Sunshine State’s first execution in almost a year. Former Gov. Jeb Bush (R) enacted a moratorium on the death penalty after a botched execution last December. The state adopted a new death penalty protocol in May. Crist set the execution for Nov. 12 (PALM BEACH POST). • **NEBRASKA** Gov. Dave Heineman (R) announced the formation of a work group to examine the Cornhusker State’s anti-nepotism laws. The group will make recommendations on whether changes are needed in procedure or state statute (GRAND ISLAND INDEPENDENT). • **TEXAS** Gov. Rick Perry (R) said last week that he wants the state’s pension fund to divest from holdings in companies that do business with Iran. Perry said he will first look to start the process on his own. If that does not work, he said he is considering calling a special legislative session to deal with the matter (HOUSTON CHRONICLE).

— *Compiled by RICH EHISEN*

Hot issues

BUSINESS: The CALIFORNIA Supreme Court rules that recreation providers may be held liable for accidents caused by gross negligence, even if the participant or their parent had signed a liability waiver beforehand. Under state law, gross negligence is defined as “an extreme departure from the ordinary standard of conduct” (LOS ANGELES TIMES). • In an effort to deter the theft and illegal resale of copper and other building materials. LOUISIANA Gov.



Kathleen Blanco (D) signs HB 126, which mandates that scrap metal dealers keep a record of a seller’s driver’s license or other identification and provide it to police if asked. Dealers who do not keep the records face up to a year in jail and a \$1,000 fine (TIMES-PICAYUNE [NEW ORLEANS]). • Still in **LOUISIANA**, Blanco vetoes SB 223, a measure that would have more than doubled the minimum auto insurance coverage requirement for Pelican State motorists. Blanco said the measure did not allow for phasing in the cost increases (NEWS STAR [MONROE]).

- The **MASSACHUSETTS** Senate approves legislation that requires Bay State companies to immediately notify consumers when their private information has been breached. The measure, which also allows consumers to freeze their credit reports and establishes procedures for the disposal of old data containing Social Security numbers, moves now to Gov. Deval Patrick (D) for review (BOSTON GLOBE).
- The **PENNSYLVANIA** House endorses legislation that will allow utilities to offer long-term fixed-rate power contracts to large industries in order to keep them from relocating to other states for more stable rates. It moves to Gov. Ed Rendell (D), who is expected to sign it (ASSOCIATED PRESS).
- **ALASKA** Gov. Sarah Palin (R) signs legislation that requires all cigarettes sold in the Last Frontier State to be “fire-safe,” meaning that they are designed to fizzle out if left unattended or dropped (FAIRBANKS DAILY NEWS-MINER).

Upcoming stories

Here are some of the topics you will see covered in upcoming issues of the State Net Capitol Journal:

- **Medical marijuana**
- **Animal protection**
- **The bullying battle**

CRIME & PUNISHMENT: LOUISIANA Gov. Kathleen Blanco (D) signs HB 652, which enacts a one-year driver’s license suspension for motorists convicted of a first-time drunken driving offense. A second conviction comes with a two-year suspension. The measure will allow drivers to obtain a hardship license that allows them to drive to and from work, but only if they install an ignition interlock device on their vehicle (TIMES-PICAYUNE [NEW ORLEANS]). • Still in **LOUISIANA**, Blanco also signs SB 215, which enacts penalties of up to five years in jail and a \$2,000 fine for street drag racing that leads to serious injuries (TIMES-PICAYUNE [NEW ORLEANS].)

EDUCATION: CONNECTICUT Gov. M. Jodi Rell (R) signs legislation that bars anyone convicted of a serious criminal offense within the preceding five years from obtaining a school bus driver’s license. The law also bars applicants who have been convicted of a felony or crime involving child abuse (HARTFORD COURANT).

Once around the statehouse lightly

GRAVE INJUSTICE: NEW JERSEY is fond of referring to itself as the “Crossroads of the American Revolution,” ostensibly because many of the battles waged during our fight to disengage from England 230-plus years ago happened on Jersey soil. Several men who risked life and limb to sign the Declaration of Independence are also buried underneath that very terra firma. But according to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, recent efforts to preserve and honor those gravesites have fallen flat, victims of lawmakers’ hesitance to spend the money to do so. The Assembly initially approved \$200,000 to pay for the work in January 2006, but the matter has since been a, uh, dead issue. Assemblyman Reed Gusciora, who helped sponsor the measure, says he understands where his fellow lawmakers are coming from, noting, “They’ve always been leery of sending the message that we’re spending on bricks and mortar rather than people.” Especially dead people, I suppose.

LINCOLN SLEPT HERE...AND HERE: While NEW JERSEY may take exception to spending large coin on honoring the past, it is apparently no problem in other states. Take INDIANA, for instance. As reported by the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, the Hoosier state is committed to dropping \$1 million on a campaign to highlight the fact that Abe Lincoln spent part of his youth there. That is chicken feed, however, compared to the \$6 million KENTUCKY plans to spend to remind everyone that Lincoln was actually born in the Bluegrass State. Both come as the nation prepares to mark the bicentennial of Lincoln’s birth in 1809. Several other states, including of course ILLINOIS, aka “The Land of Lincoln,” also plan big dollar celebrations.

MONEY WELL SPENT: Not! At least that’s the thought after a host of environmental groups banded together to launch a campaign to oust the head of the TEXAS Commission on Environmental Quality...only to learn that she had already told Gov. Rick Perry months before that she would not seek another appointment. According to the *Houston Chronicle*, Public Citizen and the Sierra Club were among the groups that ponied up \$20,000 for billboards around Austin calling for Kathleen Hartnett White’s ouster. They tried to save a bit of face by claiming there is no guarantee that White will leave when her term is up next month. But Robert Black, a Perry spokesman, couldn’t resist taking a quick swipe, saying, “We applaud these groups getting out in front of something that was already going to happen anyway.”



YES, PLEASE SEEK HELP: It hasn't been a good year for NEBRASKA Sen. Danielle Nantkes. As reported by the *Omaha World Herald*, the 29-year-old Nantkes was given a year's probation and fined \$1,000 last May after copping to a DUI charge and refusing to take a chemical test after she ran her car into a snowplow in February. Then in March, the Cornhusker state Accountability and Disclosure Commission tagged her for another \$750 for not filing a campaign finance disclosure on time. After four months and two reminder letters, she finally coughed up the check -- which promptly bounced. Nantkes says it was all a misunderstanding and that from now on, she would "retain professional help" in managing her campaign money. That may not be the only sort of professional help she's in need of.

SICK, BUT NOT THAT SICK: UTAH attorney Dr. Clark Newhall thinks every lawmaker should see "Sicko," Hollywood filmmaker Michael Moore's celluloid indictment of the nation's healthcare industry. After all, when Moore came to CALIFORNIA last month, sympathetic lawmakers, union members and healthcare workers flocked to the steps of the Golden State Capitol to sing praises for the movie's message. To wit, Newhall sent an invitation to all 104 Beehive State lawmakers to come see the show when it came to Salt Lake City last week. As the *Deseret Morning News* reports, he even dipped into his own pocket to buy 100 tickets to make sure pols didn't have to pay their own way. Alas, Newhall's effort was mostly to no avail -- only two lawmakers, the state insurance commissioner and a few healthcare officials actually showed up for the freebie. Newhall says he'll try again during the September interim session.

— By RICH EHISEN



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